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LUCHA LIBRE WEEKLY

Steve

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Double Main Event! HAY UNA NUEVA PROMOCION: AAA (see Page Six) First: SPECIAL ISSUE (Why They Do What They Do)

This issue is going to try, successfully I hope, to give an idea of how the lucha libre style of wrestling works, and as it says above, why they do the things they do.

In The Ring

First, let me go over some of the rules of lucha libre, but as I do, I will actually cover much more ground. Except for rare occasions, all matches feature a bout of tecnico(s) versus rudo(s). This is NOT the same thing as a babyface versus a heel, although it is close. A tecnico, as you might guess, is the wrestler who performs the "scientific" or "technical" moves. This wrestler should do the flashier moves and more difficult holds. The rudo wrestler generally is limited to (but therefore allowed to use) punches and kicks. Generally, a rudo wrestler will try to show some technical expertise but whereas a rudo may use technical moves and may fly, a tecnico IS NOT ALLOWED to punch or kick. This explains why a referee, sworn to enforce the rules, will hold back a tecnico wrestler's arm or leg to prevent them from punching or kicking. These things are forbidden for a tecnico to do. The fans know this and this is why there is no riot when a ref like a "Gato Montini" or "Gran Davis" gets super-involved. The fans will boo and whistle when the ref overdoes his involvement and seems to favor the rudos, but the fans still understand the rules.

A wrestler may be replaced in the ring in only one of two ways: when he is tagged in and when his teammate in the ring is knocked out of the ring. By the way, lucha libre rules in Mexico state that a tag is valid only if the wrestler making the tag is "in control of the situation." So a tag made by a wrestler while he is being controlled in a hold will not be allowed. This explains why there essentially is no "hot tag" in Mexico even with all of the tag-team matches that there are. Otherwise, when a wrestler is knocked out of the ring, a teammate can (and almost always does) replace him. By the way, it is not necessary to literally tag out if you are in the ring; as long as you are leaving the ring, you may simply leave and be replaced.

How does a fall end? In a singles match, just as in any other country. In a four-man or pareja match, the loser of the fall is the team that first has both of its members defeated. In a six-man or trio tag, the team loses that either has its captain pinned first or, if neither captain has been pinned, when its other two team members have been pinned. There is one exception to all of these tag match finishes. No matter who or how many wrestlers are involved, when there is an AUTOMATIC DISQUALIFICATION finish, the team doing the illegal deed is DQed no matter which team member is guilty. Basically there are only four DQ situations: using an illegal hold (tombstone piledriver or "la martinete" is the only illegal hold I know of); a foul or low blow; re-entering the fall after you have been eliminated (and its corollary, continuing to attack an already eliminated wrestler); and fourth and finally, refusing to pin a wrestler (continuing to pick him up when he's clearly beaten) after a ref warning. All falls are no time limit. It is possible to have a draw, if there is a double pin, double countout (the count in Mexico is twenty), double disqualification, etc., but these are rare (well, they are rare in the CMLL).

Next, it's time to look at what happens during a fall. During most matches each wrestler will try to exhibit his tecnico or rudo ability as the case may be on his opponent. There will be a lot of give and take to try to put both the style and the opponent over. It is crucial to understanding this to understand that lucha libre matches in Mexico are really not so much a match-up of good versus evil, though there is clearly an element that exists, so much as it is a confrontation over "who is the more macho." One of the most macho "spots" in lucha libre wrestling is one of the most important of them all, but one that American and Japanese fans will often either overlook or scratch their heads over. You will see it often, and in some variation in every match. The spot I mean is where one wrestler summons all of his energy and desire and hauls off and pops the opponent (usually on the chest) while the opponent stands there and takes it. The opponent will then return the favor. Understanding the macho roots of this spot will go a long way towards understanding why they do what they do. A lot of the spots involve an opponent's literally standing there

and waiting for his opponent to do his move. Which is more macho--the guy who does his move beautifully or the guy who takes it and still gets up to continue the fight?

Just a brief mention now of the referees' role. Because of all the "action" and "flying" that goes on, traditionally there have been two referees to police this fact action, except in singles matches. The referees are there to make sure that each wrestler WRESTLES WITHIN HIS STYLE. It is possible to have a referee favor the rudos; each promotion has a ref who does; right now in the CMLL the two are Rafael el Maya and el Gato Montini. Generally these referees will only be blatant when a key feud needs to be heated up. All the referees count all pinfalls very slowly, but most count them about the same (a successful pin in both major federations takes a cover of about six seconds).

The rules emphasize action. This is best exemplified by the "loose" tag-in/tag-out rules. But there are other examples. The referees will be very lenient about policing action outside the ring and will be similarly lenient about two- or three-on one advantages in the ring. Also, the preponderance of flying moves emphasizes a style that as far away from basic (but static) mat wrestling. The rules and style also emphasize winners. Rarely will you see a non-finish in a "big" match in Mexico (well you might with the UWA but it is still fairly rare.) One of the lucha libre fans' favorite rules in the one regarding finish of major matches. If there is a *caballera* (hair) or *mascara* (mask) versus *mascara* or versus *caballera* match, a key rule states that the match is "sin indulto, sin empate." What this means in practice is that if there is any kind of inconclusive finish to the third fall, such as a double pin, double DQ, double COR, or whatever, BOTH MEN must lose, whether it is their mask or their hair or whatever. Also, title can change hands and masks and hair will be lost if the finish is COR or DQ. Almost never will you see (especially in the CMLL) a double pin or double count out finish in a stipulation match. Lizmark and Jerry Estrada had a double pin in a CMLL/NWA Light Heavyweight Title Unification match last 12/15, and that's about it in the CMLL. That promotion has had two hair matches in the last three years end in double count outs, and both men lost their hair. The purpose of this is to assure the fans that when the promotion advertises that a hair, a title, or a mask will be defended or settled, that just that happens.

Another important item is the order of matches on the card. Almost always, the lighter weight wrestlers wrestler first, and the heavier ones later. If there is to be a womens' or midgets' match, it is usually second on (very rarely first) as if going on first would be an insult to the women or midget. Unless there is a title or stipulation match, all other matches will almost always be trio tag matches, and at some point in every match, everyone will get pinned for a fall. For the wrestlers, when everyone does a job, then no one does a job, and no one is treated special. This also allows different combinations of wrestlers-pinning-other-wrestlers, and allows feuds and finishing holds to be emphasized to the fans as needed. Usually in each trio match, one man per side will be involved in a direct feud with the other two. It is generally considered wasteful to try to "heat up" more than one feud per match, as at the end of the evening, you (as the promoter) have asked the fans to remember an awful lot. (This rule of no more than one feud per match will be regularly violated on TV, but only there, and there because the TV announcers can and will get across the points in the match that need to be made and that the promotion wants remembered).

I think I have gone far enough at this point with what happens during a card and then during a match. As always, if you have any questions on this, write or call me. Now it is time to go on to a different tack.

The Business

The area of Mexico that I cover (which is the center of the country and which represents over one-half of the population of the whole country) is served by two large and two small wrestling promotions. The two large ones are the Consejo Mundial de la Lucha Libre (translates as "World Wrestling Council"), which used to be the Empresa Mexicana de la Lucha Libre (EMLL--translates as "Mexican Wrestling Company")--I will get into the name change later. This organization employs (all of this is written as of 5/1/92, before any "split" in promotions) 165 wrestlers (an estimate courtesy of the wrestling commission, about which also more later). The headquarters of the organization are at 179 Calle Doctor Lavista, Colonia Doctores, Mexico City, 06720, Distrito Federal, Mexico (Metro stop Balderas). That address is the same as "la Arena Mexico," the largest indoor arena in Mexico, with a stated capacity of 17,100 seats, though even legally over 18,000 could squeeze in. The arena occupies the first three floors of this enormous building. The fourth floor contains the offices of the promotion. The fifth and top floor contains the "Arena Mexico gym," where head trainer Pepe Casas trains many of the CMLL stars. In addition to employing far more wrestlers on a full-time basis than does any other promotion in the world, the CMLL also books far more dates than anyone else. Here, as an example, are the largest of the dates they book each week. Each Monday they are at Chiconquac; Tuesdays at la Arena Coliseo (at 77 Calle Republica de Peru, Colonia Centro, Mexico City, 06010, Distrito Federal, Mexico, Metro Allende) and la Arena Cuatitlan; on Wednesdays they are at the el Cortijo bullring (55 Damasco, Colonia Romero Rubio, Mexico City, 15400, Distrito Federal, Mexico, Metro Oceania), la Arena Naucalpan, la Arena Ectapeac, and at la Arena Coliseo de Acapulco; Thursdays at la Arena Isabel de Cuernavaca, la Arena Cuperuac, la Arena San Juan Pantitlan; Fridays at either la Arena Mexico or la Arena Coliseo and they are also in

season, la Arena Puebla, el Auditorio Municipal in Los Reyes La Paz and la Arena Lopez Mateos; and Saturdays at la Arena Xochimilco, la Arena Aragon, al Arena Altavilla, and la Pista Arena Revolucion (Avenida Revolucion y Calle Rembrandt, Colonia Nonoalco, Mexico City, 03700, Distrito Federal, Mexico, Metro stop San Antonio). Sundays they have a show at most of these arenas as well, including Arena Mexico, Coliseo, Pista Arena Revolucion, Arena Naucalpan, Arena San Lorenzo, el Cortijo, Arena Azteca, and others. Many wrestlers work double shots, especially on Sundays. The President of the promotion is Francisco "Paco" Alonso Lutherroth. Paco is the grandson of the original EMLL founder, Salvador Lutherroth Gonzales, who promoted his first card at the old Arena Mexico (not at the same location as today's) on September 21, 1933, 17 days after the empresa's legal founding. Paco began his current role in I believe 1974. The vice-president of the company is Antonio "Tono" Pena; Pena is also the producer of all the television, which naturally includes the Galavision shows we see. The treasurer is Juan Herrera. These three men form more of a round-table or committee-style leadership than a one-above-the-other organizational chart. As of the moment this group employs 165 wrestlers and has two two-hour television shows per week on Televisa.

The UWA (Universal Wrestling Association, technically the Alianza de Lucha Libre International) was formed in late 1974 when several wrestlers split off from the EMLL. Only one of those wrestlers still wrestles today, and that is Anibal. During the late 1970's and most of the 1980's it was the largest wrestling promotion in Mexico. Located at 40 Calle Ciencias, Colonia Escandon, Mexico City, 11800, Distrito Federal, Mexico (Metro stop Patriotismo), the UWA is run essentially by two men. They are President Carlos Maynes Flores and Vice-President Karloff LaGarde. Maynes is the nephew of founder Francisco Esperanza Flores. The UWA does not run so many shows as the EMLL. On Mondays they run at la Arena Puebla and la Arena Isabel (Leon, Guanajuato). Tuesdays they run la Arena Queretaro (Queretaro, Queretaro) and la Arena Pachuca in Pachuca, Hidalgo. Wednesdays they have cards at la Arena Celaya in Celaya, Guanajuato and at la Arena Lopez Mateos (Tlalnepantla, Mexico). Thursdays sees the big weekly card at la Pista Arena Revolucion as well as a card at la Arena Toluca (Toluca, Mexico). Fridays are the TV tapings at la Arena Netzahualcoyotl in Netzahualcoyotl, Mexico. Saturdays the UWA runs la Arena Isabel (Cuernavaca, Morelos) and again at la Arena Pachuca. Sundays is the biggest weekly card at the el Toreo de Cuatro Caminos bull ring (Naucalpan, Mexico); they also run la Arena Netzahualcoyotl and la Arena Toluca again on Sundays. At the present time, the UWA employs roughly seventy wrestlers. They have one two-hour television show per week, called "los Idolos de Hoy en Lucha Libre," and it is shown Saturday afternoons from 2:30 to 4:00 pm, local time. Many of the wrestlers who are currently employed by the UWA have been there for over ten years, with no change in character, and for a promotion running nightly shows in a territory, it is easy to see why staleness has set in.

Two smaller promotions do also run in the Mexico City area, although for the past eighteen months or so they both have been exclusively affiliated with the UWA. One is the childrens' "cartoon" promotion, the AWWA. Founded by luchador Super Muneco, several wrestlers such as Super Raton, Super Pinochio, Super Archie, los Thundercats, los Tortugas Ninjas, Coliseo Dos Mil, and los Arqueros del Espacio got their start with this promotion. Super Muneco is semi-retired and the few reports I have had of his working a card in the last six months have been near his residence near Tijuana. The other promotion is the Tijuana-based one, the WWA (World Wrestling Association), founded by Benjamin Mora and run today by his son Benjamin Mora junior. Two other of Benjamin senior's sons are also in the business. One, Sergio, is the editor-in-chief of Lucha Libre Mundial magazine and the other, Alcatraz, is the chief announcer of the UWA television show and an ex-luchador. The WWA runs cards mostly in the northwestern border towns in Mexico, but does have several champions working the Mexico City and SE Mexico area. For much of 1990 and 1991, the Tijuana area was dormant, with a behind the scenes power struggle going on. The struggle involved Benjamin Mora junior, the EMLL, the UWA, the wife of Super Astro as she holds a valid Tijuana's promoter's license, and some of the wrestlers. It appears Mora and Associates have gotten the upper hand in Tijuana and are focusing most of their promotional efforts there.

There are also thriving territories in Monterey (Carlos Elizondo is the promoter), Guadalajara (Raul Reyes), and the Texas-border towns of Juarez, Matamoros, and the like. I cover mostly the Mexico City news since that's the information that's available to me here, but Ovaciones newspaper estimated at the time of the strike last year that there were over 200 cards in Mexico every Sunday and far more wrestlers make their living here than anywhere else.

Each of the territories is governed by a fairly legitimate and fairly honest commission. The most powerful are the commission of boxing and wrestling for the Distrito Federal and the one for Estado de Mexico. Though the commission and its members are not infrequently used in angles (stopping matches for blood, suspending referees, that sort of thing) they still have more power and perform more functions than anywhere else I know. Each wrestler must pass an annual (or more often if deemed necessary by the commission) physical. Each one must pass a "competency" test of wrestling, tumbling, flying, and olympic wrestling before being licensed. The commission has the power to revoke either a promoter's license (they did in Juarez last December) or a wrestler's license (like el Justiciero) at the given commission's whim. The commission is funded mainly by the annual fees it collects and a percentage of the gates. In 1991 in the D. F., 333 wrestlers were given licenses to wrestle by the commission.

Further, like it or not, all wrestlers belong to the wrestlers' union. Actually, el Sindicato Nacional de Luchadores y Referis Profesionales covers referees and wrestlers alike. It is interesting to note that the union is funded by a 3% tax taken off the top from each wrestler's pay check for each match, before taxes. This adds up to quite a considerable sum. Actually, the sum is even greater than you might think as all foreign wrestlers (i. e., non-citizens of Mexico) are taxed, even though they are not allowed to belong to the union. This goes for obviously foreign guys like Fabuloso Blondy or even Hispanic foreigners like Konnan el Barbaro, el Misterioso, or los Hermanos Guerrero. Many wrestlers are unhappy with the union for one of two reasons. First is that the 3% take of the union is so substantial that it provides the union leadership with quite plush incomes, office space, perks, etc., and many wrestlers do not feel that is necessary. The syndicate is a subsidiary of the Mexican version of the Teamsters, and many feel that a recent published report accusing the syndicate of undue Mafia influence is pretty much on the mark. The second reason that many wrestlers dislike the union is because of its heavy old-boy/pro-UWA leadership. Both among the active wrestlers who make up the current board of the union and amongst the full-time daily union leadership, there is little doubt that the UWA and its band of veteran performers is the preferred organization. Even the media reported how during the strike the union seemed to sway way to one side over the other. The union secretary general, and lead spokesman, is Manuel Solano Vazquez, known as Manny Guzman, and he is the second-in-command and the highest ex-wrestling-connected influence on the union. The union president was assigned to this post by the Teamsters and has no wrestling background, and Guzman is given much leeway in the day-to-day operations. Both major promotions have representatives who sit on the board; the UWA is led by Dos Caras and also sends el Indomito and el Villano I and several others (I saw them without their masks and don't know which is which). The few EMLL seats are held by el Satanico (leader), el Pirata Morgan, Pierroth junior, Ringo Mendoza, and los Brazos, who are actually peacemakers among all sides of the union.

For more on any changes that might come about as a result of the CMLL split, see the late news update on page 9.

The Masks

I was not sure at first whether to put this in with the opening paragraphs, under style, or separately here. I decide on the latter, even though a lot of work in the ring with the masks really belongs in a style analysis. Many people ask me "why are there so many masks and characters in Mexican wrestling?" I think the best way to get a handle on that is to examine what the Mexicans think of when they think of lucha libre. As I have said before, it is a sort of National Theater, like a Kabuki or Noh in Japan, where everyone has their parts. Wrestlers are asked often for their biographies, and they will give their "nombre real" (real name) and "nombre de guerra" (name of battle). That's a key point. By assuming the new name in the ring, by assuming a costume, by assuming a new personality, now they are ready to fight the traditional battle of "who is the more macho." And macho it is. When some wrestler rips another's mask, it is not to reveal his identity, but is to symbolically rape him, stripping him of his battle costume. Unmasking or de-hairing your opponent in a big match is not a loss but a rape or really more of a symbolic castration and a humiliation, within the rules of the theater. That's why promoters almost never let more than one mask-ripping battle occur per card—it is so important and carries such weight that to do it more often dilutes the impact too much. Some of the masks/costumes/battle names are obviously aimed at children; examples are "la Plaga del Ring" (Ponzona, Enjambre, and Marabunta, a "creature feature" gimmick as Carlos Rey of *The Three Count Professional Wrestling Newsletter* calls it) and "el Trio de Ultratumba" or the team from beyond the grave. Some are straight from Mexican history, such as Canek, the legendary black snake who became a prince in Mayan literature and which was also the name of the king of the Yucatan Peninsula, Jacinto Uc, in the 1700's, or, in a different way entirely, la Mascara Sagrada. Many, from Kung Fu to Octagon to el Ultimo Dragon, are in the ninja/oriental/kung fu fighter mold. Others range from soccer gimmicks (America, la Aguila del America, el Goleador) to football gimmicks (Rams, Super Bowl, el Super Maquina) to mystery gimmicks (el Rey Misterio, el Misteriso) and so on. The sources and origins are virtually limitless. But almost always it is the wrestler who makes the mask and not vice versa. Some of the concepts that Antonio Pena has created during his four-plus years as "idea man" for the EMLL have worked much better than he expected (Octagon and el Misterioso fit into this category) while others (like Enjambre, Marabunta, or the horrible "el Tiburon Rojo" gimmick he gave for three weeks to Javier "el Monarca" Cruz) have bombed. One can never tell ahead of time if the gimmick will work. Who knows if "el Duro," "Full Contact," or "el Furor" will work in the EMLL as they get introduced this month? The best guess of success is how good the wrestler underneath is.

And actually that is the best way still to figure whether anyone will get over in Mexico. If he (or she) can work, then usually some form of character modification can be made. It might be a major one such as Asai as el Ultimo Dragon, a minor one such as new ring costumes for los Destructores (Tony Arce and el Vulcano), or just a chance to shine in the spotlight for a moment, like el Huracan Sevilla and la Bestia Salvaje. It seems the fans are more than willing to overlook the mistakes and search out the successes, if they sense the wrestlers are trying hard enough. And now, let's look at the role of the fan(s) in Mexican lucha libre.

The Fans

I am often asked how many "smart" or "hard core" fans there are in Mexico. It's a tough question. The fans there are unlike the fans here in their passions for the spectacle. They are almost like rabid movie fans who know every film an actor has been in. Actually, a real good way of describing them that I came up with is that they are all "Bill Apter" in the sense that every one of them knows the script of every feud they will see that day and all the background history of all the wrestlers. They do not know how it is worked but I have little doubt that they know that it IS worked. You could not find a country or a fandom where the concept of "real versus fake" matters less. As I have said often, it's not so much good versus evil or a morality play as it is macho versus more macho or even just plain rudo versus tecnico. Each promotion hopes the fans cheer the way that the promotion wants. But I sense here, in the grand respect the promoters, wrestlers, announcers, press, etc., have for "la porra ruda," that the promotions in Mexico are far more at ease with the fans cheering for the "bad guy." Here you finally see the old performers' adage of "I don't care whether you cheer for me or against me or who you cheer for as long as you cheer for somebody (and don't sit on your hands)." In fact, there is a sizable "porra ruda" (rudo's cheering section) at every arena. The most notorious ones are at the major arenas-el Toreo de Cuatro Caminos for the UWA and la Arena Mexico for the CMLL.

CMLL TELEVISION RUNDOWN: This card was taped Friday, May 1, 1992, just two days after Antonio Pena had turned in his resignation, and the effects could not yet be felt. The opener from the la Arena Coliseo card saw los Guerreros del Espacio (el Guerrero Maya (Esteban Mares), el Guerrero del Futuro (Jose Luis Feliciano), and Damian el Guerrero) defeated the debuting el Tigre Universitario (said to be from Monterrey), la Aguila Solitaria, and captain el Solar 1 two falls to one in a total elapsed time of 23:38, the longest opener and one of the longest matches I can recall on Galavision. The end of the third fall and the match came when el Guerrero del Futuro pinned la Aguila Solitaria with a beautiful halfway-across-the-ring diving body press. You may have heard the expression "they lost the match." Well, in this match, they never had it. There seemed to be genuine communication problems all the way around. The only smooth spots were when el Solar 1 was in the ring with the masked Guerreros, who are ex-Black Terry and Jose Luis Feliciano and had worked with Solar often in the UWA. In fact, Solar's appearance here was a MAJOR surprise, and I assume (though don't know for sure) that it means he is jumping. The likely reason that they are using Tigre Universitario is as a favor from Alonso to the Monterrey territory to keep Pena out (which worked). **

The segunda aired after highlights of the "Children's Day" special card taped 4/30/92 at la Pista Arena Revolucion. The match saw a real jerry-rigged set of teams and found Ulises Plus (Tony Salazar, with a ringname change due to contractual problems), el Filoso, and captain Ciclon Ramirez win two out of three falls from el Guerrero de la Muerte, el Guerrero Negro, and captain el Hombre Bala. I still believe that el Guerrero Negro, a real veteran, is Jerry Estrada's brother or cousin or some relative; I know el Hombre Bala is a brother of el Pirata Morgan. Because the first and third matches went so long, this one was kept real short, only 5:56 for three falls, and ended when el Filoso (a character created to remind fans of the lucha libre museum in Coyoacan, D. F.) pinned el Guerrero Negro with a side slam. Referee Rafael el Maya was portrayed as a fair referee in this match; he is normally a heel ref but this was done to set up Rafael's heel tactics in the main event. They put some heat on the match by having Ciclon Ramirez "injured" in the first fall and being helped out of the ring and then returning to save the day in the third fall. * 3/4.

There was a heavily edited "Cartometro" popularity poll (which many of Pena's boys would have been on). Then came the semifinal. El Dandy, el Jalisco, and captain el Angel Azteca defeated el Espectro junior, el Espectro de Ultratumba, and captain la Bestia Salvaje two falls to one in a total elapsed time of 20:13. The finish of the third fall saw el Jalisco pin la Bestia Salvaje in this month's miscarriage of justice award winner with a simple backwards drop. I am told that el Jalisco is one-third of a very famous Guadalajara trio called "los Jaliscos" but he was new to me. I would not be at all surprised to find that he was on the TV this week as a favor to Guadalajara promoter Raul Reyes to keep Alonso in good stead there and keep Pena out. El Jalisco was barely in the whole match. El Dandy, who has put on a TON of weight (he's not fat like el Brazo de Plata but he is overweight), still gets great heat. Azteca and Espectro junior ripped at each other's masks and Dandy bled from a Salvaje posting, leading Dandy to challenge Salvaje to a hair match (I doubt it will take place as no match was scheduled the following Friday to heat things up). Dandy is still a fine worker but Salvaje is even better than Dandy now, which is saying something, and should not be missed when on television. Salvaje is truly something special and getting a very deserved push. ***

The main event was designed purely to keep the heat up on the feud between The Love "shoe lift" Machine and The Blue "a foot shorter" Panther, and it did. Panther captained a team of himself, la Fiera, and Kendo Nagasaki from Japan's SWS and they defeated Saigon Dragon el Ultimo Dragon (Yoshihiro Asai), la Mascara Sagrada, and captain Love Machine in three falls in 15:38. The finish of the match saw Panther pin Machine with a power bomb plus Panther draped a leg over the lower rope for heel leverage, a VERY rare move in Mexico. Referee Rafael el Maya saw this but continued his count anyway. Machine actually got more cheers than usual tonight (not like Vampiro though). Nothing special. Dragon looked super and I am still amazed at how well Barr has adapted to the style. ***

HAY UNA NUEVA PROMOCION: AAA

On Thursday, May 7, 1992, at a news conference in Mexico City, Distrito Federal, Mexico, ex-CMLL Vice-President Antonio "Tono" Pena formally announced the creation of a new wrestling federation in Mexico, the AAA. The initials stand for el "Asistencia Asesoría Administración, S. A. de C. V.," where S. A. de C. V. is the equivalent to the "Inc." in the U.S.A. or the "Ltd." in the United Kingdom.

Pena had submitted his formal resignation from the CMLL (Consejo Mundial de la Lucha Libre) to CMLL President Francisco "Paco" Alonso Lutherroth on Wednesday, April 29, 1992, at the CMLL headquarters on the fourth floor of la Arena Mexico. That resignation climaxed a long behind-the-scenes power struggle between Alonso, long-time president of the EMLL (Empresa Mexicana de la Lucha Libre) and Pena, who had "created" the CMLL within the EMLL as a means of a new focus for the promotion.

At the press conference, Pena further announced dates and locations for his first few cards and, of greater fan interest, announced which wrestlers would be leaving both the CMLL and the UWA (Universal Wrestling Association, legally known as the Alianza de Lucha Libre Internacional) to join his AAA.

Pena announced that because of various contractual agreements signed by the UWA and CMLL with various arenas around Mexico, the arenas that the AAA would be running for May and June of 1992 would be "las arenas chicas" (small arenas) with an average capacity of around 4,000 people. None of the arenas is located within fifty miles of Mexico City. Oddly enough, the contracts between the UWA and CMLL and the larger Mexico City-area arenas was just signed within the last two months in the formal conclusion to the wrestlers' union's strike of late 1991.

Pena announced that the first show would be held Friday, May 15, 1992, at a small arena in Veracruz, Veracruz, Mexico. The next card would be held Friday, May 22, 1992, at a small arena in Queretaro, Queretaro, Mexico. The third card, and final one for May, would be held Friday, May 29, 1992, at the same small arena from the 15th in Veracruz. There will also be one card each Friday in June. No cards have been announced for any other days of the week. Most wrestlers work seven days a week, and some days twice per day. This will be quite a switch for those wrestlers who have joined the AAA to work just once per week.

Pena did announce the names of the wrestlers who had signed contracts with his organization. Several accompanied him for a picture that was printed in the Mexico City sports newspaper OVACIONES. Not counting the super-mini-estrellas (all of whom Pena will get and who number, I believe, 24), 30 wrestlers have signed with Pena. They are: Fuerza Guerrera, Juventud Guerrera, Octagon, la Amenaza Elegante, el Eslabon Perdido, el Hijo del Santo, Pedro "el Perro" Aguayo, el Justiciero, el Angel Azteca, Atila junior, Cien Caras, Mascara Ano Dos Mil, Universo Dos Mil, Konnan el Barbaro, The Blue Panther, Super Bowl, Quarterback, Winners, el Inmortal, Reptil, Bleda, Kid Boxer, el Picudo, Ice Killer, Doctor Maldad, Mister Maldad, la Parca, el Magnate, el Fantasma, and la Mascara Sagrada.

The "jumping" of many of these wrestlers will cause some interesting scenes to be played out in the next few months. The reason is that many of the wrestlers who are jumping hold championship titles currently in other organizations. Octagon is the Mexican National Middleweight Champion. El Hijo del Santo is the UWA World Welterweight Champion. The Blue Panther is the CMLL World Middleweight Champion. La Mascara Sagrada is the Mexican National Light Heavyweight Champion. La Mascarita Sagrada is the CMLL World Super-Mini-Estrellas Champion. And Cien Caras holds not only the CMLL World Heavyweight Championship but also with his "Hermanos Dinamita," Mascara Ano Dos Mil and Universo Dos Mil, hold the Mexican National Trios Championships.

What will become of these titles? Well, traditionally, the "Mexican National" championships have been beyond the control of any one organizations. The CMLL holds sway over most of these titles now, though the UWA has some (Cruiserweight, Lightweight, Featherweight) and the AWWA had the Trios titles in 1990 and 1991. It is possible, though I could not give you any sort of odds on it, that these titles will stay with their holder and go to the AAA.

As far as the UWA Title and the CMLL World Titles, that is a horse of a different color. So far as I can tell, there are only two options available to the older organizations. One is to strip the holder (or have the holder "voluntarily relinquish" the title). This is not a preferable option because it robs the promotion of the gates of a profitable title change match. The other option is to quickly run a series or even one match in which a new champion is crowned. This is not a preferable option because it tends to "expose the business." I do not yet know which course the promotions will choose. One note though: el Hijo del Santo has NEVER lost a title he has won; he has always vacated the belt to move to a higher weight class or switch promotions; so I would not expect him to lose his belt.

It is possible that the CMLL might well choose to do a little of both where its titles are concerned. Indeed, that was the speculation "if you read between the lines" of the OVACIONES article of May 8, 1992, as it discussed the

weekly Televisa and Galavision television tapings to be held last Friday night, May 8, at la Arena Coliseo. The newspaper strongly hinted of a very quick feud between Atlantis (NWA World Middleweight Champion) and The Blue Panther (CMLL World Middleweight Champion) that would likely develop in the main event. The match, by the way, has The Blue Panther, Kendo Nagasaki, and la Fiera versus Atlantis, Saigon Dragon el Ultimo Dragon (Yoshihiro Asai), and Alex Marvez's favorite luchador Apolo Dantes.

As long as I am on that point, here is the rest of the la Arena Coliseo card, which looks to be the worst in many years on paper (who knows though as their work rate has been better for even the poorest lineups this year than I can ever remember). The semifinal marks the return to television after an eighteen-month absence of NWA Intercontinental Champion (remember that belt?) el Faraon, as he teams with Ringo Mendoza and Ciclón Ramirez (Mexican National Welterweight Champion) to face el Felino (ex-"Baby" Casas), el Gran Markus junior, and el Ángel Blanco junior. The tercera has Lady Apache (one of the most underrated wrestlers in the world) teaming with Xochitl Hamada and Cynthia Moreno versus la Diabolica, la Tigresa (I've never heard of her before), and Martha "la Aplandora" Villalobos. The segunda has Lady Apache's husband and trainer, el Gran Apache I, teaming with la Antifaz, and el Tigre Universitario (hope he improves this week) to face los Supremos I and II and el Guerrero de la Muerte. The inicial, which will likely be off television, will feature Baby Richard and Mario Prado junior versus (Super) Kiss (not the WWA World Trio Champion) and la Antifaz.

Now, let's look at the same basic questions I had last week and see what the answers either turned out to be or seem to be turning out to be.

*** Who would get the television?** As it turns out, Alonso did. Or actually, the CMLL did. Alonso informed Televisa that there was a valid contract between the CMLL, of which Alonso is President, and Televisa, and that the CMLL expected the contract to be upheld. I do not know the length of the contract. I would expect that the television product that we are used to seeing on Galavision would remain pretty much the same for the time being.

*** If Pena gets the best talent, who is left for Alonso?** How about a name I forgot last week—Juan Herrerra. He is the CMLL financial boss and by all accounts a steady influence in the office. He is staying with Alonso. Here is a sample of the wrestlers I thought would go with Pena but did not (or have not yet): Ringo and Cachorro Mendoza, America, la Aguila Solitaria, Ciclón Ramirez, Oro, Plata, Bronce, Rocco Valente, Tony Arce, el Vulcano, el Misterioso (major surprise), el Volador, Ponzona, Enjambre, Marabunta, Saigon Dragon el Ultimo Dragon, Pierroth junior (a key loss), Jaque Mate, Masakre, Casanova el Vampiro Canadiense, all seven of the Brazos family (even more of a key loss), Apolo and Cesar Dantes, and all of the Casas family (Pepe, Baby, Canelo, and Xochitl Hamada), which likely means that Pena will not get Negro Casas.

*** What will Alonso's next move be?** Probably he has to decide what to do with the championships. Also, since Televisa, one of his financial backers, made a ton of money with Octagon's and Atlantis's movie "La Revancha," and the two are now in separate organizations, he has to calm ruffled feathers at Televisa (they likely wanted Pena as their lucha libre guy over Alonso). I suspect that since, once again, contracts have already been signed for a five-movie series with Octagon and Atlantis (with la Mascara Sagrada scheduled for two or three of these) that these contracts will be enforced by Televisine, the movie arm of Televisa, no matter what promotions any of the wrestlers work for.

*** Who will get the arenas?** Clearly, Alonso won this battle, as expected. In fact, I expected Pena to do much better than he did. Of all the arenas listed that he is running, I personally have never heard of ANY of them, not even one, and this includes arenas for Veracruz, Queretaro, Monterey, and other cities. I also expected Pena to find at least one arena somewhere within the Distrito Federal—after all that's where the twenty million people are!

*** How will this affect the UWA?** Would you believe an agreement between Pena and the UWA? One of the strange mysteries lately has been the sudden appearance on the last two UWA TV shows (aired 5/9 and 5/2, taped 5/3 and 4/26, respectively, at el Toreo) of a ring mat with the "Corona" emblem. Very few people know that Corona only became a name sponsor (on the mat) of the EMLL right after Pena joined the organization. Plus the UWA has a new announcer. Maybe it means nothing; or maybe it means something. Pena is a wrestling television producer and Lord knows the UWA television could use some help (the religious among you please excuse me for taking the Lord's name in vain). Actually the UWA is losing the services of only el Fantasma, a regular; el Hijo del Santo, a semi-regular; and Pedro "el Perro" Aguayo, who worked occasional cards for them. I am of the opinion that they would gain more taking Pena in than they would in competing with him, but still it's likely the UWA will stand put now.

*** Who controls the purse strings?** As it turned out, Alonso and Herrerra did. My educated guess is that the reason more wrestlers sympathetic to Pena did not jump (yet) to his organization is because of the limited income that they would have guaranteed over the next few months. Alonso can promise them a virtually unchanged or uninterrupted pay schedule, with television pay and exposure, nicer arenas, long-time feuds with big-name foes either

begun or continuing. Pena clearly could not promise this. And I am still puzzled as to how Pena is getting the funding for the AAA promotion. He seems to have some ties in with the national accounts sales manager at "Corona Beer" (that's an educated guess, not a fact) and I wouldn't be surprised to learn that he is still getting some funding from Televisa, though I do not know that for sure. Anyway, with neither he nor his boys making close to what they were making before (unless Pena has some funding source up his sleeve), then all the pressure is on the AAA to become big-time as soon as humanly possible. And with the combined forces of the CMLL, the UWA, the WWA, the AWWA, and the union against him, well, it won't be easy, that's for sure.

*** What does the immediate future hold?** For the fan, business as usual while 32 stars plus the midgets will be missing in action. I for one will be sad to see the midgets go. Nonetheless, this should have a very minor impact on either the CMLL or the UWA SO LONG AS THEY DON'T LET IT and pay attention to business as usual. For the 32 who jumped, ooh, that's a toughie. Eventually the EMLL took back and used every name wrestler who jumped to the UWA in 1974-1975 except Rey Mendoza (they did use most of his sons). But, that was when the EMLL was a clear number two in the 1980s. Now they are a clear number one and a jump of this small size of wrestlers does not seem likely to change things. I should note, however, that only 4-6 wrestlers jumped at the first UWA press conference in October 1974 (they had not chosen a name yet) and there weren't even as many as 32 when they promoted their first card in January 1975. It is not at all impossible that the AAA could be the number one promotion in Mexico some day. But not if Paco Alonso learned from his mistakes, at least enough not to repeat them 18 years later.

UWA NEWS: Talk about your status quo! I know very little from here because their normal news coverage has been pre-empted by the news from other fronts. I do know some recent main events, however.

* Thursday, May 7, 1992, at la Pista Arena Revolucion, saw a tri-country rudo dream team of The Can-Am Express (Danny Kroffatt from Canada and Doug Furnas from Tennessee) teaming with Jose "el Negro" Casas from Mexico to face the team of The Black Power II, Miguel "el Negro" Navarro, and Doctor Wagner junior, in a battle of all-rudo teams.

* Friday, May 8, 1992, at la Arena Netzahualcoyotl, saw Canek team with The Killer (managed by Andy Barrow) and Fishman as Canek's regular rudo trio called "los Asesinos del Ring" to face Andree el Gigante, el Villano III, and el Villano V.

* Sunday, May 10, 1992, at el Toreo de Cuatro Caminos, saw Canek on the tecnico saide (he is a babyface no matter whether he is a rudo or a tecnico) teaming with Andree el Gigante and el Villano III to face the team of Bufalo Allen (Allen Coage aka Bad News Allen aka Bad News Brown) who is returning for his 1,000,001st trip of Mexico, la Bestia Hawiana Kokina (who also has made bunches of trips here), and The Black Scorpio (Charles Skaggs, who works as "The Flying Scorpio" for New Japan, and is making his debut match in Mexico in this very match).

* Andree has been working regularly in Mexico; must be all those "tope suicidas" he does in each match. He was booked Thursday (5/7) in Toluca, Saturday (5/9) in Cuernavaca, and 5/11 at a new arena built by the firm that made all the Mexico City rail cars (Ferrocarri) in a Mexico City suburb.

* Otherwise, very little is going on here, though I can report that there were no title changes in the big three matches of two weekends ago. Los Cowboys (Silver King and el Texano) defeated los Cazadores del Cabezas I y II (The Head Hunters A and B) two falls to one to retain the UWA World Parejas Championships in a match held Friday, April 24, 1992, at la Arena Netzahualcoyotl in Netzahualcoyotl, Mexico, Mexico. Two days later (4/26) at the same arena, The Killer (managed by Andy Barrow) retained the UWA World Junior Heavyweight Championship in his first defense of his second reign by defeating Enrique Vera two falls to one. And, on Tuesday, April 28, 1992, at la Arena Queretaro, Queretaro, Mexico, el Villano V made his initial defense of the UWA World Light Heavyweight Championship a successful one by winning two out of three falls from el Scorpio junior, who was challenging for his first title of any kind in this match.

* As I had mentioned earlier, but in a spread out form, the UWA has returned to taping its television at el Toreo de Cuatro Caminos in Naucalpan, Mexico, Mexico. This became effective with the card held Sunday, April 26, 1992, and broadcast six days later (5/2/92) on Imevision/Channel 13 in Mexico City. Also, they have replaced announcer Alfredo Ruiz with a new masked announcer (thanks to David Scherer in Marmora, New Jersey, with his help here). I expect to have new UWA tapes in time for a rundown in the next issue.

* Finally, the UWA has decided not to repeat an experiment from 1991 that turned out disastrously. Last year, the promotion decided to try to run two shows per week at their main arena, the el Toreo bull ring. They added a Friday night (8:30 pm) show to go with the regular Sunday afternoon (5:00 pm) show. It didn't work for several reasons, chief among them that the Fridays they ran were during the rainy season. So the idea was nixed for 1992.

CALIFORNIA RESULTS: The card held Sunday, May 10, 1992, at The All Nations Center in East Los Angeles, California, before an overflow of capacity crowd, featured a double main event. In the semifinal was a mascara contra caballera match as Vandal Drummond (Kurt Brown) risked his hair versus The Gemini Kid's mask. In what was said to be a really good match, Drummond won two falls to one, revealing Gemini to be Eric Anderson. The first fall went to tecnico Gemini with a power bomb and a cover. The second went to Drummond who managed after taking a severe beating to nail Gemini with a clothesline and then "pass out" but while covering Gemini for the fall. The third fall ended with a clean pinfall, a surprise Brazo Cradle (i.e., a surprise as in out of nowhere, not a surprise that the Brazos would be so pleased if they knew Drummond was using one of their finishers). I hope to have a tape review next week; I WILL have a VERY CURRENT UWA tape review next week (through 5/2/92). The main event, "en revancha de superlibre," saw tecnicos Piloto Nuclear, Piloto Suicida, and Capitan Oro take it on the chin again as they lost two out of three falls to Super Boy, the truly legendary Al Murrieta, and Tornado Negro II. The finish saw Super Boy pin Piloto Suicida with a CHavo Guerrero-style backflip but with a "tope en reversa" reverse diving head butt added on for good measure move.

JAPAN NEWS: Sad to say, but a weak finish for the Mexican or Mexican-style luchadores in the New Japan Super Junior Tournament. The Black Scorpio (Flying Scorpio in Japan) got 8th place out of 9, Eddy Guerrero got 7th place, The Pegasus Kid got 5th, and Negro Casas got 4th, as native Japanese Norio Honaga (3rd), el Samurai (2nd), and Lyger (1st) took the top three slots. Then on the big card May 1st, Lyger and Pegasus beat Casas and Samurai when Pegasus pinned Casas, while underneath Koji Kanemoto (9th in the tournament) beat Eddy Guerrero. Hussein el Gran Sheick (Jose Luis Arias Romero) has been booked for the W*ING Junior Heavyweight Tournament to begin 6/4/92 in Otake. Universal returns to Korakuen Hall 5/24 with Akiyoshi versus Gran Hamada on top; Atomo (aka Robin Hood), America, and Ciclón Ramirez vs. Shu el Guerrero, el Scorpio junior, and el Engendro the semifinal; Takayama and Sakigake Gantetsu versus Lightning Kid and Dynamic Lynn the segunda; and an All Japan Women's match the inicial. Esther Moreno makes her 5th tour of Japan and Cynthia Moreno her 2nd tour for the All Japan women's tour of 5/7-6/30. Finally, for FMW, The Starman (Billy Anderson) and The Centurion (Tim Patterson) had a successful tour end May 7th. Through 5/3, Starman was 4-6 and Centurion was 2-8, but the magazine I saw reported that they got over well.

LATE NEWS: This past Sunday, May 10, 1992, the CMLL held a one day parejas tournament at la Arena Coliseo. From what I have read I do not think there was anything overly special or significant in this card. In fact, I feel they are biding time until the 22nd when they return to la Arena Mexico. There were eight tag teams entered. They were: 1) Koga (Toshiyuki Nakahara from Japan's SWS promotion), and Iga (Masao Orihara from SWS), 2) brothers Ringo and Cachorro Mendoza, 3) la Mano Negra and el Hijo del Solitario, 4) Kung Fu and Kendo Nagasaki (what a team), 5) el Egipcio and Javier "el Monarca" Cruz, 6) Satanás and Gargola el Sultan, 7) el Supremo I and el Hombre Bala, and 8) Ciclón Ramirez and la Aguila Solitaria. I do not know which four teams beat the other four in which particular order in the first round, but I do know the semifinals and finals. In the first semifinal Ringo Mendoza and Cachorro Mendoza defeated Kung Fu and Kendo Nagasaki in one fall. In the second semifinal, Javier "el Monarca" Cruz and el Egipcio (who is the National Heavyweight Champion) defeated la Mano Negra and el Hijo del Solitario in one fall. In the finals, also in one fall, los Hermanos Mendoza won as each Mendoza pinned an opponent simultaneously after a big dropkick. No more news on the split in promotions either. The UWA ran its annual Sunday afternoon card at the "el Toreo de Cuatro Caminos" bull ring in suburban Naucalpan, Mexico, Mexico, on Sunday, May 10, 1992, at 5:00 pm. The main event was billed as Andree el Gigante's last match at el Toreo on this tour. He went out with a loss. He teamed with Canek, the babyface rudo, and el Villano III, and they lost in three falls to Bufalo Allen, la Bestia Hawaiana Kokina, and The Black Scorpio. Canek, in a smart move, put over The Black Scorpio as the finish of the third fall. Scorpio, who is Charles Skaggs from Denver, Colorado, has been wrestling in New Japan rings since April 1991, and has improved dramatically. He will get super over here and don't think for a moment Canek doesn't know it. Canek will look better in against Scorpio than he would against Kokina or Allen. Kokina has REALLY put on the weight (he dwarfs el Brazo de Plata if you can believe that) and may legitimately be near 500 pounds. You know how Stan Hansen holds the all-time record for most tours of Japan by a foreigner. Bufalo Allen (Bad News Allen, Bad News Brown, Allen Coage, take your pick) holds the similar record here, as he has toured 3-4 times a year since at least 1981, maybe earlier. The only other result I have from here is the semifinal. Your job here is to guess who got pinned in the third and deciding fall. The teams were Fishman and The Canam Express I y II versus el Fantasma, el Solar I, and Haraoki "el Gran" Hamada. If you didn't guess el Fantasma, shame on you. By the way, they are now billing Doug Furnas (who wears a gold mask embroidered with stars and stripes) and Danny Kroffat (who wears a gold mask embroidered with a red maple leaf) in all the papers and magazines as the CanAm Express, to justify Furnas's American/flag/motif mask. El Fantasma is gone as of the 15th to the AAA. El Solar I, who worked the Galavision show that aired Sunday the 10th, has been regularly booked for the UWA since, so I guess he was in at that EMLL card as a one-shot deal, probably as a favor to Paco Alonso, and has not appeared to jump. Lastly, el Verdugo and Popitekus are back with the CMLL full-time as a cannibal tag-team to be known as "los Cavernícolas I y II" with new caveman costumes and Verdugo even wears Papa-Shango-style face paint. Some of you may have seen their pictures in "Super Luchas" number 60. Popitekus—the Cavernario Galindo of the 1990s. Somebody wake up Pat Hoed—I think he fainted.

MINI-BIOGRAPHY: LOS COWBOYS--SILVER KING Cesar Gonzales Rivera, is the son of wrestling legend Doctor Wagner (Victor Manuel Gonzales Rivera). He was born January 9, 1968, in Torreon, Coahuila, Mexico, and debuted as Silver King, with a mask, in November 1985. He had debuted under his own name in Durango on February 11, 1984. The Silver King mask and costume did not last long, as in June 1988, in Tijuana, Baja California Norte, Mexico, King lost his mask to el Hijo del Santo. For a while during the mid-1980's King worked as part of "los Fantásticos" trios, which had several different lineups; when King was with them, he was teamed with Kendo and Blackman. That did not get over well, but when he convinced old family friend el Texano to team up as part of Texano's constant gimmick, "los Cowboys," both men seemed to be revitalized. This was in early 1989; soon thereafter first King then Texano jumped to the UWA. Over the past 10 years, trios titles have become much more important in Mexico than parejas or four-man tags, but Silver King and el Texano seemed to have found themselves a niche. On July 24, 1991, in Veracruz, Veracruz, Mexico, los Cowboys won the WWA World Tag Team Titles (in a fictitious tournament final). On January 19, 1992, at The Korakuen Hall in Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan, they defeated Haraoki "el Gran" Hamada and Kendo to win the UWA World Tag Team Titles, which are issued jointly in Japan with the WWF Intercontinental Tag Team Championships. Silver King is the more acrobatic and charismatic of the two Cowboys and one of the best luchadores in the world. **EL TEXANO**, Juan Conrado Aguilar Jauregui, was born on November 26, 1958, in Mexicali, Baja California Norte, Mexico, the state in which he still resides. He debuted at the tender age of 13 in Sonora, in February 1972, in San Luis Rio Colorado, Sonora, Mexico. He lost his mask to el Brazo de Oro, of all people (back when neither was a big star at all) on December 4, 1977. On September 7, 1980, he defeated el Gringo to win the UWA World Welterweight Championship. He held the title until 1983, when he relinquished it for being "over the weight limit." He then joined the trio "los Misioneros de la Muerte" with trio founder el Signo and teammate Miguel "el Negro" Navarro, and worked steadily on that trio team until November 22, 1987, when el Texano turned face on el Signo, thus breaking up that trio team, at el Toreo. In reality, el Texano had essentially decided to retire. At the urging of buddies Silver King and el Dandy, el Texano resurrected his favorite gimmick from his days in the 1970's in the northern circuits as "los Cowboys." You may remember a match from early 1990 where el Dandy, el Texano, and el Angel Azteca teamed to face Pierroth junior and two others. The top rope broke as Pierroth junior was running the ropes; Pierroth was injured. El Dandy and Azteca had an argument as to which member should step down from their tecnico team to leave it a 2-on-2 match, and that began the all-tecnico feud between Dandy and Azteca. It was Texano's last match in for the EMLL as he was off to the UWA and three world parejas titles. El Texano is the steadier, more mat-oriented of the two and usually calls the shots; not so flashy but very reliable.

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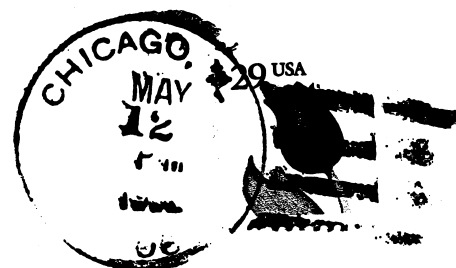
TUESDAY, MAY 12, 1992

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